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Knowledge of the World

Language barriers inhibit development

Access to Knowledge

Knowledge of the World

ARABTERM : A technical dictionary for the Arab world

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Young people in the Arab world face huge obstacles in gaining access to knowledge, but access to knowledge of the world is the prerequisite for sustainable development.

A significant hurdle is the language barrier between the Arab world and the industrialised nations to the north that generate the majority of technical innovations.

Many companies only publish their manuals or provide user interfaces for electronic devices in English.

Because of this, it is imperative for most experts to attain a basic knowledge of technical English terminology.



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Apart from small segments of the private sector, this is complicated even more by the lack of clarity regarding the correct Arabic equivalent for numerous technical terms. Given the diversity of the many spoken dialects in the region, there is often no distinct or standard term for technological innovations.

Often, the lack of specific technical terms in Arabic can be particularly felt in everyday business matters.

It is not uncommon for Arabs from different countries in the region to be forced to use a third language in order to communicate in technical dialogue.



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Even at many universities in the Middle East and North Africa much of the teaching material for engineering is only available in either English or French as there are no Arabic translations.

Students are often given texts in English or French while receiving instruction in Arabic during class time.

This ultimately contributes to a reduced level of work market-compatibility for many young Arabs.

The objective is to improve access to global knowledge

The Arab Human Development Report of 2004, which featured contributions from numerous researchers from the region, called for an increased effort in building a modern Arab knowledge society. The authors call for introducing modern information technologies and the Arabization of imported knowledge. This 'enables young minds to develop firm critical and creative capacity in their own language and to assimilate the rising volume of scientific knowledge'.

Drawing on these demands, the project for creating a multilingual technical dictionary was initiated : On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is implementing Arabterm. Appearing in twenty volumes, the dictionary will provide the basis for the standard translation of textbooks, curricula and technical handbooks. It will offer young Arabs in training or studying at a university a quick reference aid for the many language problems that arise from Morocco to the Arabian Gulf.

The Arabterm Online Dictionary

Simply enter the search term and click.

In addition to glossary lists in German, English and French, a translation in Classical Arabic is provided.



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Examples are given of terms that are more commonly used in various Arab countries.

Classical Arabic : العمود المرفقي

Arabic (Egypt) : عمود الكرنك

Arabic (Tunisia) : فيلبروكان

Arabic (Lebanon) : كرانك

Arabic (Yemen) : كرين



In an adjacent column, there is a short definition of the term.



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The picture content is an illustration of a technical drawing that can also be printed out and used in class.



An interactive discussion forum offers each user the opportunity to exchange ideas and comments or more detailed definitions.



What is needed next:

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) provides technical training to experts of the Arabization Coordination Office (BCA) & the German Jordanian University (GJU) as well as translators. Arabterm is the first and only quadri-lingual technical dictionary in Arabic language and needs your support.

This includes:

- › The search process and quest for content-providing institutions & academia, incl. travel
- › The selection and lexicographical preparation of the vocabulary
- › The translation and linguistic revision
- › The terminology approval according to arabization criteria
- › The IT-upload and set-up incl. website and GSM amenities
- › The maintenance by a team of experts keen on keeping dictionary entries up to date at regular revision intervals

A printed version can be added separately for distribution in underprivileged regions of the Arab world.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) will be financing the six first volumes.

In order to cover a larger range of technical topics, fourteen more volumes will be needed in order to ensure thorough preparation and text processing.

All costs included, one volume on one topic costs € 400.000,-.

Scheduled domains in order of appearance

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> Water

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> Renewable Energies

© giz Bode



> Electrical Engineering

© giz Lort



> Textile industry

© giz Kopp



> Transport and Infrastructure

> Your suggestion

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دولة

Imprint

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

ARABTERM c/o BCA

82, rue Oued Ziz, 10 000 Rabat Agdal, Morocco

Executive editor: Guido Zebisch

Author/Editors: G. Zebisch/N. Benhouhou

Photos: GIZ, Ralf Bäcker

NAPALM

Rabat 2013



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ARABTERM / GIZ c/o BCA
82, rue Oued Ziz - Rabat-Agdal
Tel: +212 (0) 537 77 92 32
Gsm:+212 (0) 661 68 76 49
Email: guido.zebisch@giz.de

Websites
www.arabterm.org
www.giz.de/Maroc
www.giz.de/Marokko